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## Save Local Journalism bill unanimously passes Senate committee

By Sora O'Doherty

A bill that would further delay the deleterious effects of Assembly Bill 5 on the newspaper industry was passed unanimously by the California Senate Labor, Public Employment and Retirement Committee on Aug. 11. The bill was introduced by Assemblymember Blanca Rubio.

AB 323 extends the newspaper carrier exemption from Dynamex for two additional years, allowing news outlets to stabilize from COVID-19 losses. It also requires state agencies to give preference to local news organizations, specifically ethnic media and community organizations, in contracts and subcontracts for marketing and outreach advertising services.

Introducing the bill, Rubio said, "Our free media - one of our most cherished constitutional rights - is at risk of extinction at a time when local information is critical for our communities and the rebuilding of our economy." According to Rubio, AB 323 will prevent 'news deserts' by providing a lifeline to California's community and ethnic media outlets.

Local Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan said, "I'm a proud coauthor of AB 323 because now more than ever local journalism is critical to keeping our citizens informed and engaged. I look forward to the bill coming before me in the Assembly."

Numerous witnesses spoke in favor of AB 323, including California Black Media, the Los Angeles County Business Federation and the California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Witnesses urged the committee to consider the importance of community journalism as the state addresses COVID recovery.

AB 323 is now headed to the Senate Appropriations Committee for consideration.

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